

Testimony of Sara Skrabl
UConn School of Dental Medicine
Appropriations Hearing – February 15, 2017

Good Evening,

Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and members of the Committee, I am Sara Skrabl, a 2nd year Dental Student at UConn. I have lived my entire life in Connecticut, and am a resident of the city of Ansonia. I'm a product of Connecticut public schools and received my B.S. in Biology from Southern Connecticut State University before enrolling at the University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine.

Thank you for all of your incredible support for the University of Connecticut Health Center. Through the state investments in UConn Health, from Bioscience CT to your regular investments in our Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine, you have made it a great university that is making a real difference to our State and to UConn students – 70% of whom are from Connecticut.

I understand the challenges you face in trying to balance the State budget. No question it is a very difficult time. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you and urge you to minimize the cuts to UConn Health.

The recommended budget released last week cuts UConn Health's state funding.

On a personal level, I fear that deep cuts to UConn Health will negatively impact my education and my ability to care for patients.

There are many reasons why I chose to enroll at the UConn School of Dental Medicine, but foremost are the excellent education offered and the opportunity to help underserved people throughout Connecticut. While Connecticut is a prosperous state, we still have a heavy burden of people who have difficulty accessing and affording high quality medical and dental care. The services offered by UConn Health provide patients from all corners of the state with care that models the highest quality and latest innovations in all fields of medicine and dentistry.

UConn's Dental School program is one of the best in the entire country. The preparation we receive enables us to provide the best dental care possible and to represent UConn and the state of Connecticut through our professional excellence and achievements. It would be detrimental to the state as a whole if the abilities of the educators and providers at UConn Health were to suffer as a result of financial deficits; future providers would suffer, patients in need would suffer and the general quality of care available in the state of Connecticut would eventually suffer. I fear that if future doctors and dentists no longer feel that the UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine are able to provide the same quality of education and patient care, they will attend school out of state and may not return to provide care here in Connecticut. On the same thread, out-of-state medical and dental students may be less likely to attend UConn, and less likely to choose Connecticut as a place to reside and work.

My time and experience in the dental clinics at UConn Health have already helped shape my future in dentistry immensely. I have met some of the most amazing patients, whose health has steadily declined over the years due to lack of access to care and financial hardships. This is an extremely common theme

with patients who seek care at the clinics at the UConn Health Center. These are people who have worked hard their entire lives, who have had to neglect their own health in order to provide for family, take care of loved-ones or just try to survive in an ever changing economy. They rely on our services to return them to optimal health and to help them maintain a state of well-being that will allow them to live longer and more satisfying lives.

I am very concerned that the proposed cuts will be harmful to my education and my ability to have the resources necessary to help the hard-working, underserved people of Connecticut. Affordability, access and quality of care are attributes that make UConn Health second-to-none. If these aspects were to change I fear that the repercussions would be immeasurable. The health and well-being of the residents of Connecticut is priceless. Healthy people are able to work and pay taxes, are less likely to need state funded medical insurance and are likely to feel more satisfied and content with the state as a whole. The programs funded by the state are critical to making sure that UConn Health can continue to play the important role that it does in contributing to a strong Connecticut.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this evening and for your ongoing support of UConn Health. I urge you to find a way to restore these cuts so that UConn Health can continue to provide the important benefits to our students and patients and to Connecticut's economy.

Sincerely,

Sara Skrabl